

NO PLACE FOR HATE:

A *Dare to understand.*[™]

Case Study



Who Are We?



INTERFAITH CENTER

OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA™

Founded in 2004, the Interfaith Center advances mutual trust, understanding, and cooperation among faith communities, in order to work together for the common good of the region.

Through celebration, service, education, and action, the Interfaith Center enables people of all faiths to share their deepest convictions, shape solutions to common problems, and live out their highest values and aspirations.





What Happened?

AFDI's Ad in Philadelphia

The American Freedom Defense Initiative, or AFDI, is an organization the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) lists SIOA as an anti-Muslim hate group. Best known for its controversial, Islamophobic advertising campaigns, on May 27, 2014, AFDI submitted the following advertisement to Philadelphia's public transportation authority, SEPTA:



*Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer,
President and Vice President of AFDI*

ISLAMIC JEW-HATRED: IT'S IN THE QURAN

**TWO THIRDS OF ALL US AID
GOES TO ISLAMIC COUNTRIES**

STOP THE HATE

END ALL AID TO ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

IslamicJewHatred.com



**Adolf Hitler and his staunch ally, the leader
of the Muslim world, Haj Amin al-Husseini**

SEPTA's Response to AFDI

On June 3, 2014, SEPTA rejected the ad, saying that SEPTA's ad policy prohibited "[a]dvertising that tends to disparage or ridicule any person or group of persons on the basis of race, religious belief, age, sex, alienage, national origin, sickness or disability."



AFDI Sues SEPTA

AFDI responded by suing SEPTA on free speech grounds, and on March 11, 2015, District Judge Mitchell S. Goldberg ruled in favor of AFDI, forcing SEPTA to run the ads on 84 buses over the next four weeks.

He wrote that the First Amendment protects outrageous and even offensive speech. The government, SEPTA being a public authority, may NOT reject political advertisements simply because the ads are prejudiced or it doesn't condone the message. "Core political speech" such as this receives some of the highest constitutional protection available.



v.





How Did We Respond?

Action Step #1

Religious Leaders Council Adopts Statement: October 14, 2014

**Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia
Statement on Anti-Islamic Advertising Campaign
Adopted on October 14, 2014**



In September, a group known as “The American Freedom Defense Initiative” (AFDI) asked to purchase advertising space on SEPTA as part of a campaign that AFDI has pursued in transit systems in several major cities across the country, including New York City, Washington, and San Francisco. SEPTA declined, due to the inflammatory anti-Islamic content of the messages. The matter is now deferred pending a legal ruling sought by AFDI.

While we affirm the constitutional protection of free speech, that does not diminish our condemnation of irresponsible speech. The language used in these proposed advertisements is distorted, prejudicial, and inflames hatred.


It is our hope as religious leaders that hate-filled messages will not be carried throughout the neighborhoods of Philadelphia on the sides of SEPTA buses, trolleys, and subways. We condemn inflammatory messages that serve to divide, stigmatize, and incite prejudice. We will continue to reject attempts to stereotype any tradition or community. Working as spiritual leaders and working with the members of the diverse faith and ethnic communities within Philadelphia, our challenge and our hope is to strengthen the ties among all communities to improve the quality of life.

The Religious Leaders Council calls on the greater Philadelphia community to join us in opposing intolerance and building trust and understanding.

The Religious Leaders Council, founded and staffed by the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia, represents 30 religious traditions within our community. It is led by Co-Conveners: Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, Rabbi David Straus, Imam Anwar Muhaimin and Bishop Claire Schenot Burkat.

Action Step #2


Launched Petition Site: December 2014

care2 PETITIONS

[START A PETITION](#) [BROWSE](#)

[Like](#) 1m

ANDREW ▾



#DareToUnderstand: Tell Philadelphia's Muslim community you stand with them & reject hateful ads!

author: [The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia](#)

target: Muslim Citizens of the Greater Philadelphia Region

signatures: 4,345


4,345


5,000


we've got **4,345 signatures**, help us get to 5,000 by May 7, 2015

[overview](#) | [petition](#)

Since April 2, you might have noticed the *offensive new ads* running on SEPTA buses across Philadelphia. The ads depict a young girl with a Muslim headscarf, and a man in a turban, with the text "BAL IZEN BECOME A BAL (T)IZEN".


edit

manage

update

other urgent petitions need your help


TAKE ACTION NOW



Pledge to Stand up for Women and Girls

signatures: 275,695


[sign now](#)



Help Protect Polar Bears from Climate Change

signatures: 185,884

[sign now](#)



Tell the EPA: We Need Protections From Fracking Pollution

signatures: 11,499

[sign now](#)

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

[start a new petition](#)

with the #1 petition site in the world

[more](#)

[care2 petitions](#) | [start a petition](#) | [care2 home](#) | [help](#) | [contact us](#)

Action Step #3

Launched Resource Site: December 2014



Resources from Friends of the Interfaith Center

(Click the logo to jump down to each organization's learning resources.)



INTERFAITH YOUTH CORE RESOURCES

- [Discussion Guide for Students to Address Current Events](#)
- [Ask Big Questions – Resources on How to Tackle Controversial Issues](#)



ISLAMIC NETWORKS GROUP (ING)

- [Education Curriculums \(Grades 7-12\)](#)
- [Education Curriculums \(College/University\)](#)
- [Resources for Professionals](#)



Action Step #4

Met with School District Leaders and Drafted Memo for School Leaders: January 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Philadelphia School Leaders

FROM: Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia and Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations

DATE: January 22, 2014

RE: Anti-Muslim Ads on SEPTA Buses and Stations



Understanding the Situation

What's going on?

In September, a group known as “The American Freedom Defense Initiative” (AFDI) asked to purchase advertising space on SEPTA as part of a campaign that AFDI has pursued in transit systems in several major cities across the country, including New York City, Washington, and San Francisco. SEPTA declined, due to the inflammatory anti-Islamic content of the messages. The matter is now deferred pending a legal ruling sought by AFDI, but if precedent holds from other cities, AFDI is likely to prevail and the ads will run in the winter and/or spring of 2015.

How can SEPTA run these ads? Freedom of speech.

The First Amendment protects outrageous and even offensive speech. The government (SEPTA is a public authority) may NOT reject political advertisements simply because it doesn't like the message or even because the ads are false. “Core political speech” such as this receives some of the highest constitutional protection available. Although SEPTA provided the Court with a compelling government interest (public safety) to restrict the ads, the court ruled that SEPTA can use less restrictive means (such as including a disclaimer on the ad space instead of an outright ban).

Who Might Be Affected?

- Muslims
- Jews
- Sikhs or other groups wearing head coverings, possibly mistaken for Muslims
- Individuals of Middle-Eastern, North African, or South Asian descent
- Individuals who are visibly religious or don religious garb

What Should I Be Looking For?

The first ad that will run will be the following:



Please look for name-calling, bullying, physical violence, or other forms of harassment directed at members of the aforementioned groups or even possibly by those members in reaction to these ads.

Resources

Please feel free to use the following link to discover educational and training resources available through the Interfaith Center, *Take on Hate*, and the Anti-Defamation League:

<http://www.interfaithcenterpa.org/adresponse/>

Also, please share these resources with your teachers, staff, parents, and administration so that they may be better equipped to handle the region's reaction to this ad campaign.

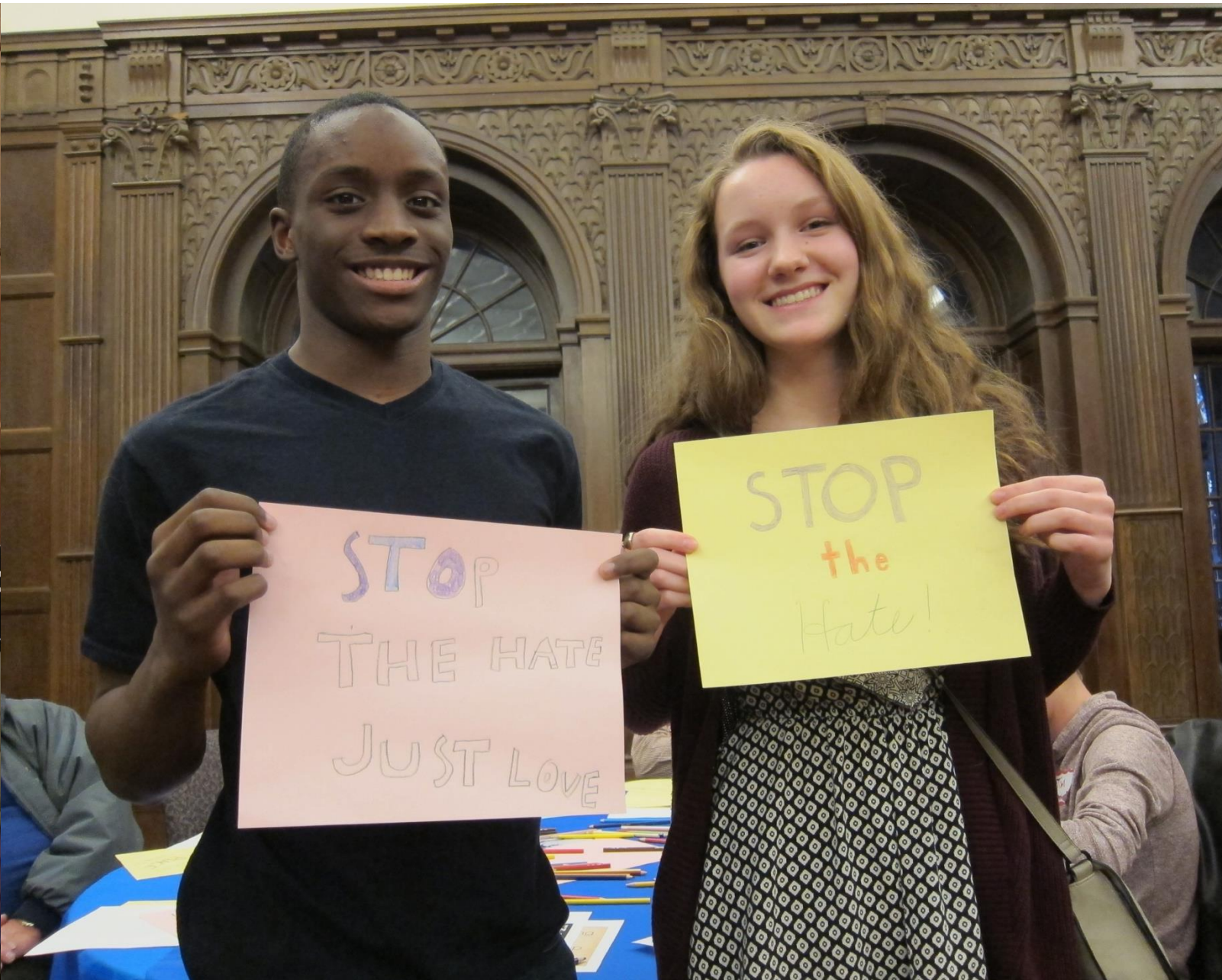
Action Steps

- **Be alert and report any incidents:** If you witness or are victim to any religious or ethnic/racial intimidation or violence CONTACT LOCAL POLICE by dialing **9-1-1**. Afterwards, you are encouraged to notify the Commission on Human Relations: Contact Randy Duque, Deputy Director, randy.duque@phila.gov, 215-686-4676
- **Arrange for a teacher training workshop** in your school or community: Contact Rev. Nicole Diroff, Associate Executive Director, Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia, ndd@interfaithcenterpa.org, 215-222-1012
- **Sign and circulate the petition** launched by a broad coalition of Philadelphia Religious, Civic and Government leaders, opposing the messages and divisive intent of the anti-Islamic ad campaign. <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/800/825/876/stand-with-us-in-opposing-anti-muslim-ads-in-philadelphia/>
- **Enter your students in a “Dare to understand.” Essay/Poster Contest.** Contact Andrew Feigenbaum, Program and Communications Associate, jaf@interfaithcenterpa.org, 215-222-1012

Action Step #5

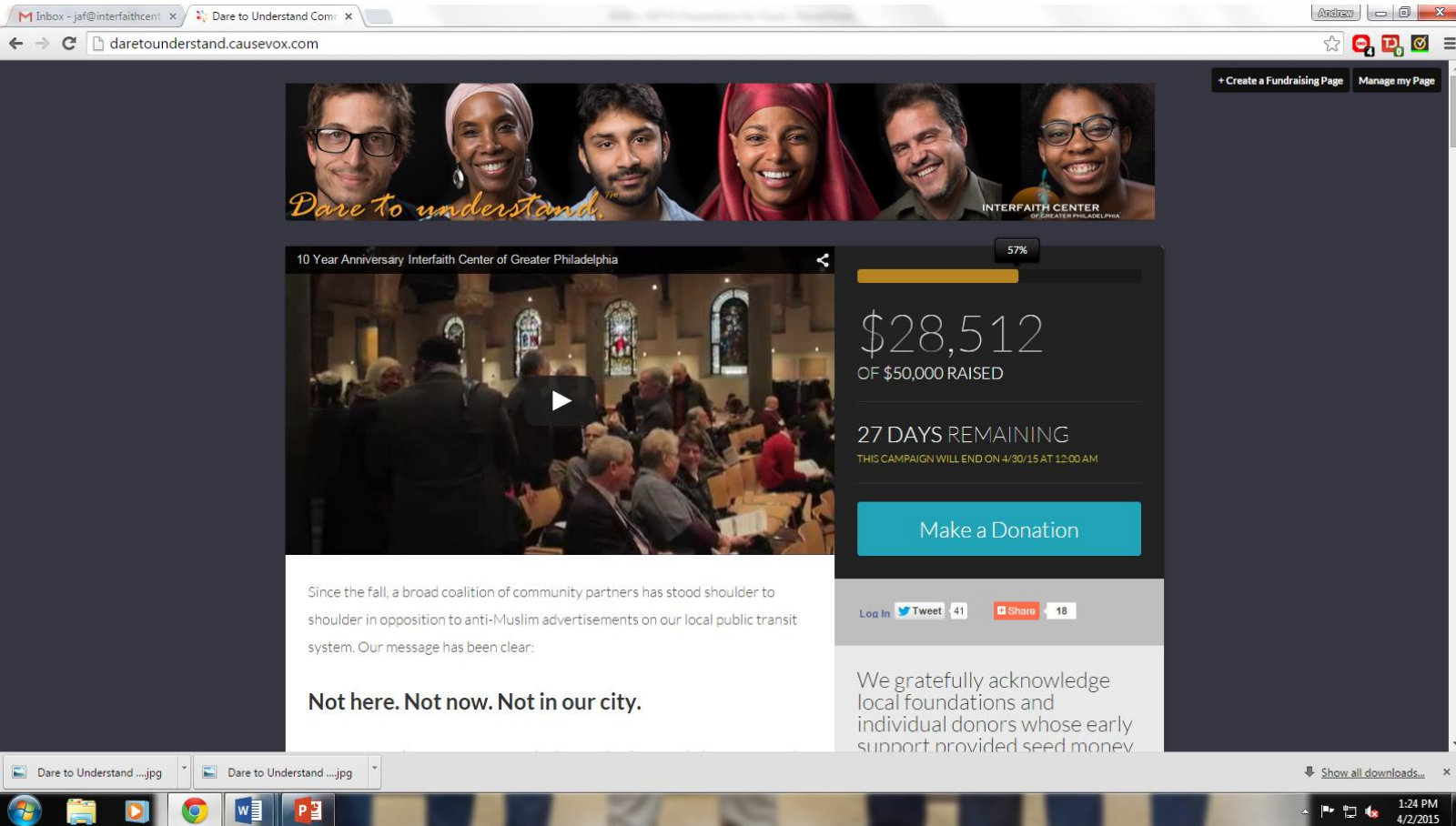
“Replace Hate With Understanding” Workshop Developed: February 2015





Action Step #6

DareToUnderstand.Org Launched: March 2015



- A crowdfunding platform and the main hub for the campaign where we updated the public on the latest news and events
- In the end, the campaign raised more than \$109,000 toward a public advertising campaign, community events, the development of education resources

Action Step #7

SEPTA Press Conference with Local Religious Leaders: Thursday, March 26, 2015



Action Step #8

Love Park Rally with Then-Mayor Michael Nutter: Tuesday, March 31, 2015



Action Step #9

Full Backpage Ad in Metro Newspaper: Thursday, April 9, 2015



Action Step #10

Digital Billboard on I-76: April 1-8, 2015



Action Step #11

Urban Posters in North Philly and Center City: April 13-May 11, 2015



Action Step #12

Dare to Understand Concert and Awards Presentation: Wednesday, April 29, 2015





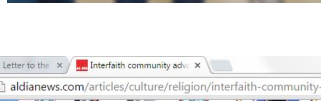
Action Step #13

Local and National Media Coverage: Ongoing



Judge: SEPTA buses can be plastered with Hitler's mug

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Interfaith community advocates education and understanding in response to anti-Islam ads



By Max Marin

March 12, 2015

Recommended 135

Was anyone expecting beheadings and torched cathedrals?

Philadelphia's interfaith communities — yes, Muslims included — are planning an open-arms response in the wake of U.S. District Judge Mitchell Goldberg's ruling that an out-of-town private group can run their anti-Islamic advertisements on SEPTA buses.

The American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI) first approached SEPTA last year, hoping to place its inflammatory ad (which links Muslims to Hitler and calls for an end to all US aid to all Islamic countries) on the transit authority's trains, trolleys, buses, shelters and kiosks. SEPTA refused the ad, and AFDI sued.

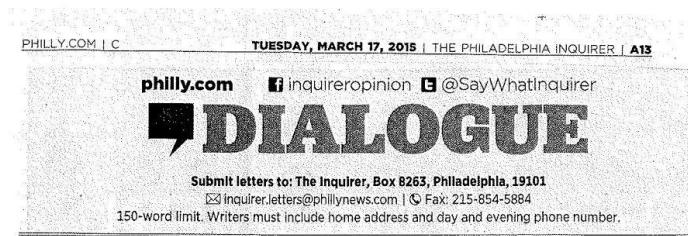


MAYORAL RACE
A mayor for Philly's Muslim community?

February 4, 2015

AL DÍA NEWS

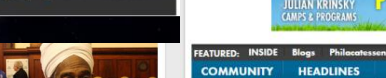
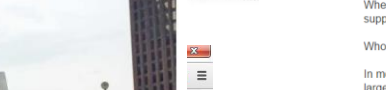
AL DÍA NEWS



ISSUE | RELIGION ADS

A message that serves to divide

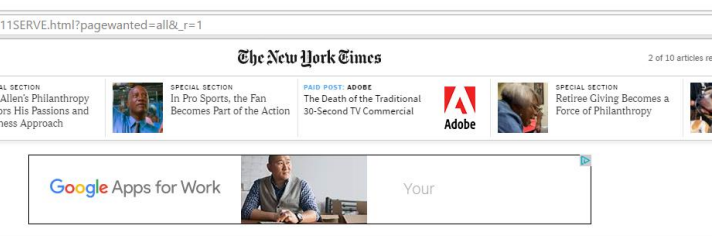
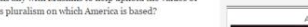
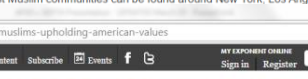
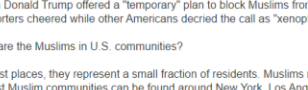
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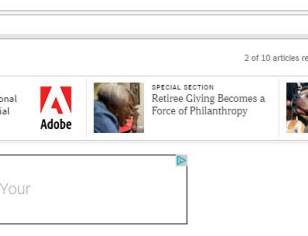
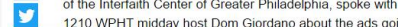
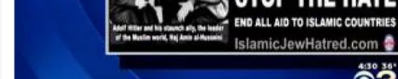


Finding Similarities Among the Differences

By JOHN HANC NOV. 10, 2008

Philadelphia
IN a circle of adolescents and adults, two heads lean toward each other in discussion. One of them, Rachel Weiss, an adult rabbinical student, wears a yarmulke; the other, Halima Bakillah, a high school student, wears a hijab, or head scarf.

They are part of a larger group meeting on a recent Sunday afternoon in a second-floor classroom at the White Rock Baptist Church. Behind them, tacked up on a wall, is a poster praising Jesus. In a nearby circle sits the Rev. Jay Gardner, the African-American youth minister of the church, engaged in similarly earnest but cordial conversation with another group of teenagers — Jews, Christians, Muslims, someone of the Bahai faith.

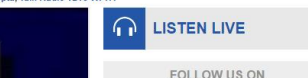


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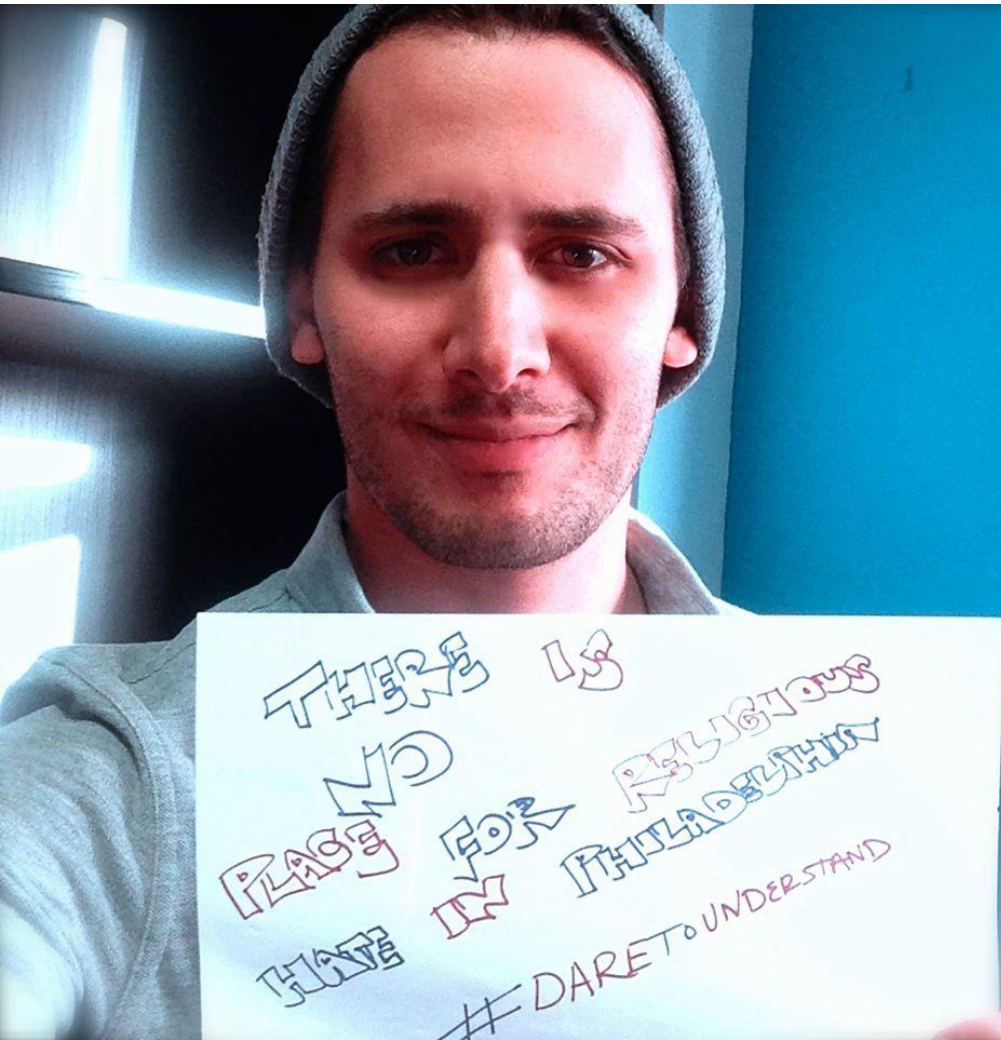
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Action Step #14

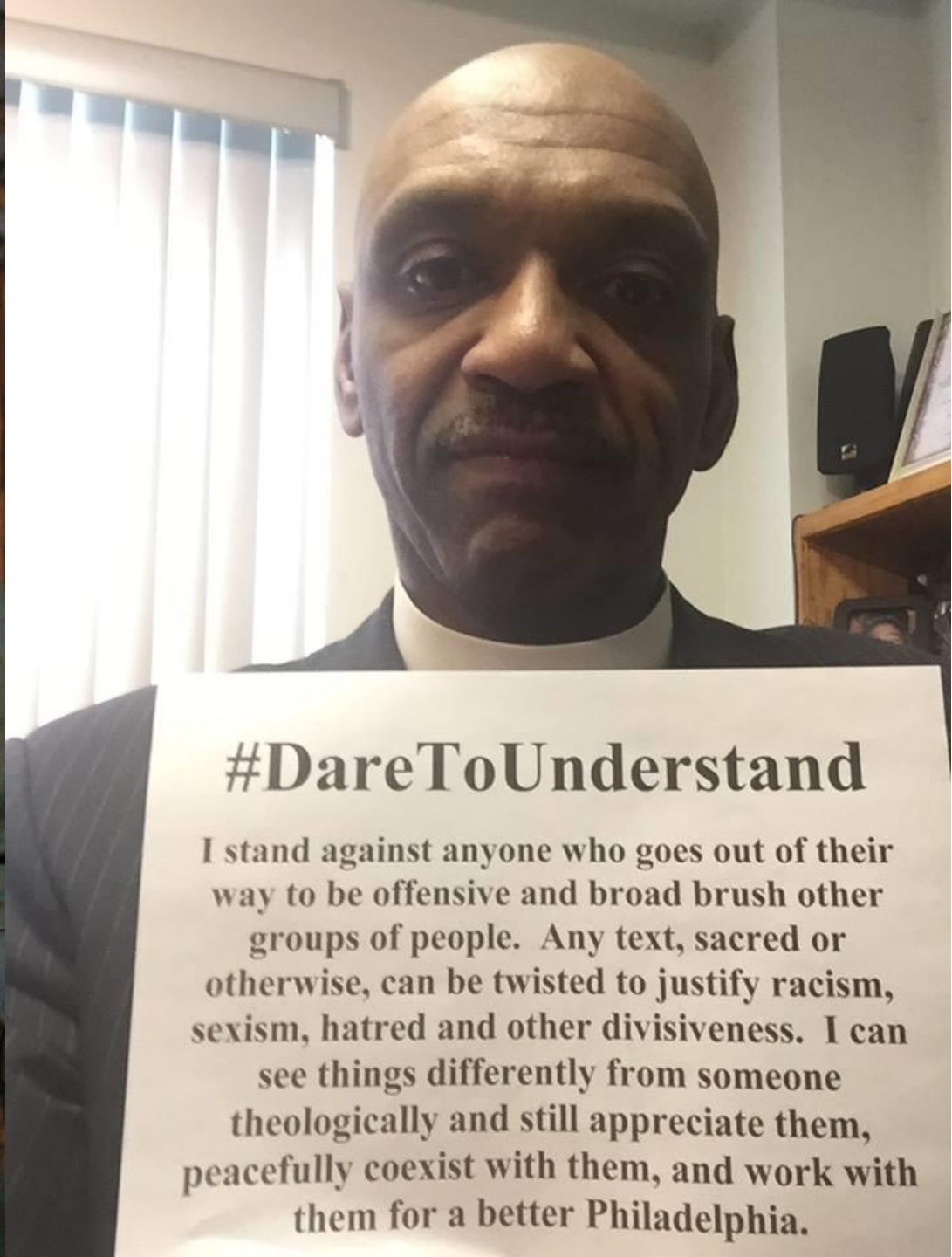
#DareToUnderstand Social Media Campaign: Ongoing





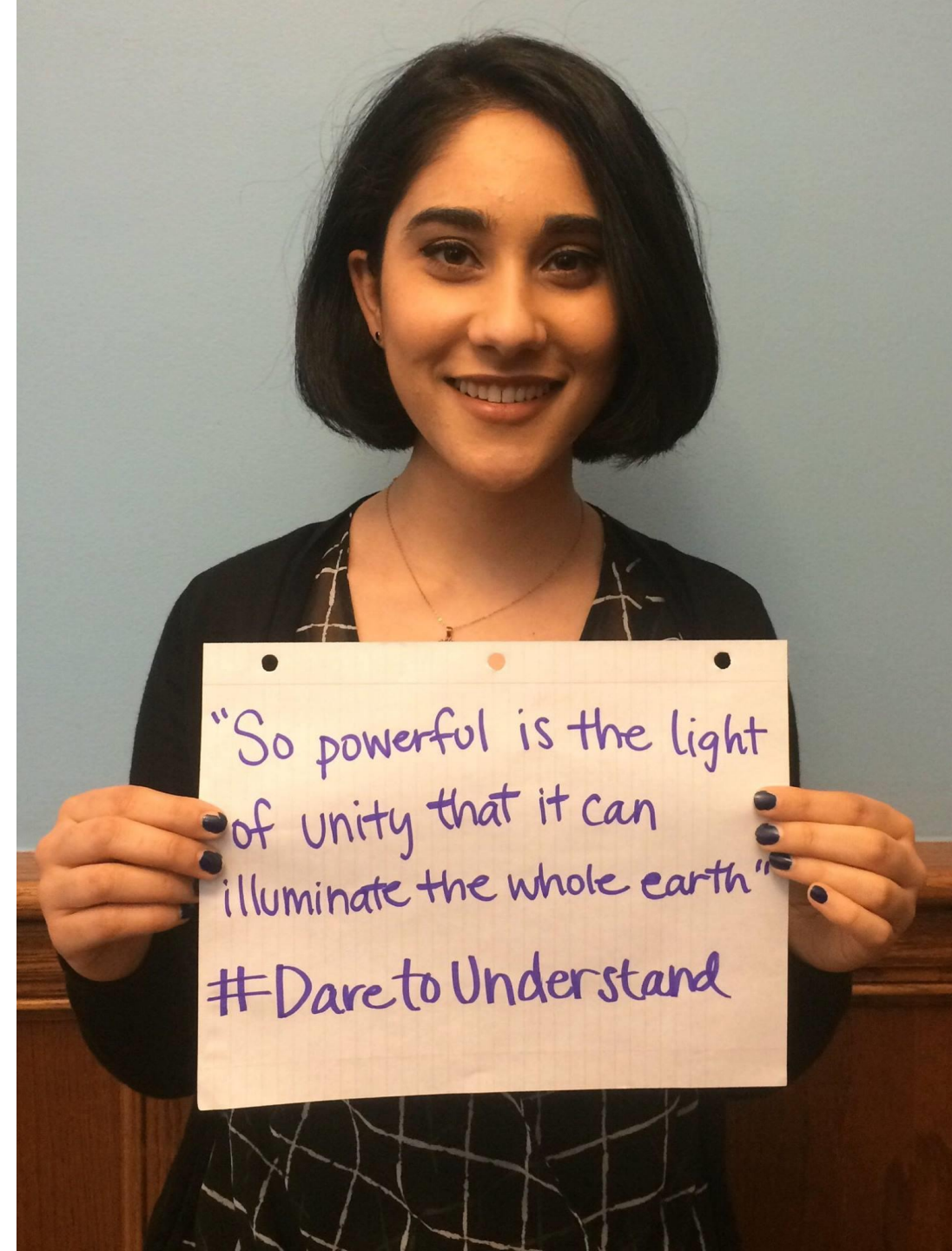
I am much, much,
more than my hijab.

#DAREtoUNDERSTAND




#DareToUnderstand

I stand against anyone who goes out of their way to be offensive and broad brush other groups of people. Any text, sacred or otherwise, can be twisted to justify racism, sexism, hatred and other divisiveness. I can see things differently from someone theologically and still appreciate them, peacefully coexist with them, and work with them for a better Philadelphia.

A woman with dark hair and a black top is smiling and holding a white sign with handwritten text in purple ink. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

"So powerful is the light
of unity that it can
illuminate the whole earth"
#Dareto Understand

A woman with long dark hair and sunglasses on her head is smiling and holding a white sign with printed text. She is standing outdoors with a body of water, a city skyline, and a bridge in the background.

My Philadelphia includes colleagues &
friends who are Muslim, Jewish, Protestant,
Catholic, Orthodox, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu,
Jain, Atheist, Agnostic, Mormon, Quaker,
Unitarian Universalist and Baha'i

#DareToUnderstand

I love my Philadelphia!

A Campaign Touching Over Half a Million People...

- **Coalition of more than 30 local organizations**, congregations, and civic agencies
- **Public ads throughout the city** - digital billboards, urban posters, and print media
- **Public rally at Love Park with the Mayor** attended by hundreds of Philadelphians
- **Petition signed by 4,300 individuals**, #DareToUnderstand on social media
- **Educational resources** for adults and youth
- **Over \$109,000 raised** in crowdfunding and special gifts

Replace hate with understanding.

Join us. Add your voice.



DareToUnderstand.org

@InterfaithPA



INTERFAITH CENTER
OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA™

JJ TIZIOU
PHOTOGRAPHY